

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONTEV 00189 161558Z

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SUBJ: NEW HEALTH MINISTER NAMED

1. SUMMARY. UPON THE RESIGNATION OF DR. JUSTO M. ALONSO LEGUISAMO AS MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH ON JAN 14, 1976, PRESIDENT BORDABERRY REPLACED HIM WITH DR. MARIO ARCOS PEREZ. A FORMER UNDERSECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH, AND MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE. DR. ARCOS' APPOINTMENT CONTINUES PRESIDENT BORDABERRY'S POLICY OF NAMING TECHNICIANS RATHER THAN POLITICIANS TO CABINET-LEVEL POSITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. DR. MARIO ARCOS PEREZ WAS SWORN IN AS MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH ON JAN 14, 1976. ARCOS SERVED AS UNDERSECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH DURING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THE BORDABERRY ADMINISTRATION. HE REPORTEDLY HOLDS EXTREME RIGHT WING POLITICAL VIEWS. ARCOS IS AN MD, A VERY WEALTHY RANCHER OF HIGH SOCIAL STANDING AND USED TO BE AN OCCASIONAL COLUMNIST IN EL PAIS (HIS

COLUMN WAS CALLED "PERMANENCIAS"). IN THE PAST HE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN CONNECTED WITH THE "ALERT URUGUAYAN YOUTH" (JUP), A FAR RIGHT ORGANIZATION.

3. DR. ALONSO'S ABRUPT DEPARTURE MAY HAVE BEEN DUE IN PART TO HIS FAILURE TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS OF THE MUTUALISTAS, MUTUAL AID MEDICAL

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PAGE 02 MONTEV 00189 161558Z

SOCIETIES, WHICH HAVE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, GREAT DEBTS TO DRUG

COMPANIES. ALSO, A DAY BEFORE HIS RESIGNATION, WHICH WE BELIEVE TO HAVE BEEN REQUESTED, AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW GRANTED BY HIM APPEARED IN EL PAIS. IN THIS INTERVIEW HE CANDIDLY, PERHAPS TOO CANDIDLY, WENT OVER THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS FACING THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH, INCLUDING THE EXCESSIVE NUMBER OF DOCTORS IN THE COUNTRY, THE MALDISTRIBUTION OF MEDICAL SERVICES THOROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AND THE FACT THAT SUCH ORGANIZATIONS AS THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE TOOK A GREATER PROPORTIONATE SHARE OF THE HEALTH BUDGET THAN THAT ENJOYED BY OTHEER URUGUAYAN CITIZENS. DURING HIS 18 MONTHS AS MINISTER, THERE WERE ALSO REPORRS THAT, DUE TO HIS LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE, HE HAD TROUBLE TAKING EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE MINISTRY, WHICH CONTINUES TO HAVE FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

AND TO SUFFER FROM A LACK OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL.

4. BIO DATA ON THE NEW MINISTER FOLLOWS:

AFTER GRADUATION FROM MEDICAL SCHOOL, ARCOS PEREZ FULFILLED VARIOUS DUTIES IN HOSPITALS WHERE HE SPECIALIZED AS A GASTROENTEROLOGIST. LAST OCTOBER, HE WAS DESIGNATED PROFESSOR-DIRECTOR OF THE CLINIC OF NUTRITION AND DIGESTION IN THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE IN THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY. HE HAS TAKEN PART IN VARIOUSNATIONAL ANDFOREIGN MEDICAL CONFERENCES ANDHAS BEEN INVITED TO OVERSEAS CONFERENCES TO GIVE TALKS CONCERNING HIS SPECIALTY. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF TWO BOOKS ON GASTROENTEROLOGY AND HAS WRITTEN MORE THAN 40 ARTICLES FOR NATIONAL AND FOREIGN MAGAZINES. ON DEC 18, 1973, HE WAS DESIGNATED A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE, A POSITION HE OCCUPIED UNTIL HE ASSUMED HIS PRESENT DUTIES. DR. ARCOS IS MARRIED AND THE FATHER OF SIX CHILDREN.

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